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TO: Members of the State Construction Code Commission
FROM: Henry L. Green
SUBJECT: Request for Interpretation

On October 12, 2001, the City of Saline requested formal interpretation of the two following questions. Below each question is a discussion and recommended response for your consideration:

Question 1: Did Section 603.2 of the 1997 International Plumbing Code require a separation of the water service pipe and the "building drain" (as defined by the Code)?

The city has taken the position that the code does not require a separation of the water service pipe and the building drain. This position is based upon the definition of building drain. This definition provides the building drain extends only 30 inches outside of the building wall and conveys the drainage to the building sewer. The City adopted the 1997 International Plumbing Code.

Section 603.2 of the 1997 IPC provides:

"Water service pipe and building sewer shall be separated by 5 feet of undisturbed or compacted earth.

Exception: The required separation distance shall not apply where the bottom of the water service pipe within 5 feet of the sewer is a minimum of 12 inches above the top of the highest point of the sewer and the pipe materials conform to Section 703.1."

Answer 1: No. However, where the water service is adjacent to the building drain/building sewer connection, separation must be maintained between the building sewer and water service.

Building drain is not specified within the language of the code text, the separation is required for the building sewer and the water service. A building drain is defined in the code as:

“That part of the lowest piping of a drainage system that receives the discharge from soil, waste and other drainage pipes inside and that extends 30 inches beyond the walls of the building and conveys the drainage to the building sewer.”

The water service pipe is required to be 5 feet away from the building sewer horizontally or 1 foot above the building sewer. A building drain pipe connects to the building sewer and therefore would by design need to maintain the separation for some distance to assure the separation for the water service from the building sewer.

Question 2: Does Section 603.2 of the 2000 Michigan Plumbing Code require a separation of the water service pipe and the “building drain” (as defined by the Code)?

Answer 2: Essentially, the same answer applies here. The separation requirements apply to the building sewer. However, the separation must be maintained as noted in the above response. Specifically, the separation of the water service pipe from the building sewer must be maintained, including at the point of connection to the building drain.